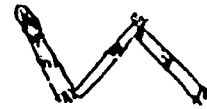


EQUISSETUM



HOARSE TALES FROM THE NATURE TRAIL

LODI LAKE NATURE AREA DOCENT NEWSLETTER

February 1990

THE PREZ SEZ:

I often take a walk through the Lodi Lake Wilderness Area to be inspired by the sight and touch of the uncontrolled growth that abounds. One pathway through the meadow was so enticing to me because the grape vines and blackberries closed in the path so much that it became an eerie and uncanny feeling to walk that way. I felt touched by nature, and I was reminded of my childhood when I walked in the woods of Washington, coming so close to living green life. I used hand shears to carefully cut back some vines that might touch my face or be in the way of school children who were being taken on tours by docents. The area was rough and untouched, and I sensed a pioneer or an Indian walking through this wild, untouched growth that made me think of being the first to emerge on this new solitary wonder. I envisioned how the first man on the moon must have felt, and I remembered the statements of school children as they discovered this environment away from sidewalks and plaster yet so close to the chirp of birds.

I could go on, but I have another story to tell, one I have put off writing about for many days as it is the opposite of the previous paragraph.

I walked to an area where several docents and dignitaries commemorated the completion of the amphitheater with a plaque and a visit by Phil Isenberg, a place where docents planted a valley oak tree last Arbor Day. Two deer pranced before them after the planting. The valley oak, one inch in diameter, was hacked to the ground. My first thought was vandalism.

Walking along the path beside the drainage ditch, I became aware of much more destruction to the wilderness. Just north of where the drain pump is located, a 12-foot wide swath to the river was made where a little path previously led you by sedges to the river. This swath uncovered the wilderness, removing the quiet and interesting path it once was. Continuing the path along the ditch, I noticed a 30-foot wide swath was cut from the ditch and encroaching into the willows where I make a stop to discuss how the Indians would use the leaves of the willow for tea to reduce pain and the limbs for baskets. The Indians were always careful to not take any more than they could use or would not raise dust while walking on the floor of the forest.

Now the scene becomes one of stumps of willows showing where the chainsaws hacked them and left stumps the length of the ditch. Young oaks and silver willows were just beginning to grow. These, too, were cut. Over 150 species of birds have been identified by members of the Audubon Society but are now exposed by the clearing of these swaths and the encroachments upon the protective covering of the wilderness. Stumps, logs, and debris were stacked at the Jerry Adrian Jameson memorial bench. Number 4 stop has 12 stumps gawking at us as we show what is left of the willows. It truly is a lesson on how man can destroy. Trash covers stumps 16 inches across, and grape vines more than one inch in diameter now lie loose where they will not grow anymore. Here is the swath that is 45 feet in width, and it cuts into the protective bird covering. We have previously told children how the natives picked grapes and berries to preserve for winter food. These were also for the benefit of birds and insects. We can now show the humiliating rape of the wilderness. Everywhere there are signs of destruction.

Man has tried to change one of the last preserves of wilderness to a parkway. It has been opened to where more cats, dogs, and man can invade the wildlife protection. People once lived in homes, lived off the land; their main diet was of acorns. They searched for and protected every living plant, animal, insect, and bird so that future families could survive.

The docents who volunteer their time to show school children and the public a place away from concrete and plaster will continue to be active but will now find it difficult to provide the atmosphere of untouched natural beauty that was once taken for granted.

Dale....



1819 Edgewood Dr.
Lodi, CA 95240
Phone (209) 369-6724

TO: Park and Recreation Commission, City of Lodi
FROM: Joyce N. Sullivan
DATE: January 30, 1990
SUBJECT: Destruction of Lodi Lake Nature Area habitat, lack of a protection policy, and other related problems.

In December 1989 Lodi Park and Recreation Department cut and removed approximately 20% of the plant habitat in the Lodi Lake Nature Area. I asked the Department spokesperson for an explanation for this action and I was told that it was done for "fire protection".

Next, I wrote a letter of inquiry to Fire Chief Larry Hughes and asked him what the Lodi Fire Department's fire protection policy is for the Nature Area. Through our correspondence, dated December 26, January 2, and January 6, and through discussions and through a tour of the area by Fire Administrative Officer Larry Lorenz, I've discovered that far more habitat was removed than was necessary to meet the fire protection requirement.

In my view, the Fire Department policy for the Nature Area is reasonable and it is a responsible policy. The Park and Recreation Department's action was neither responsible or reasonable.

I have assumed that the Park and Recreation Department was charged with the responsibility to protect and retain the Nature Area in its natural state. Instead of protection, the Commission has permitted destruction.

Obviously, the interpretation for the meaning of protecting and retaining the Nature Area in its natural state, has been left to employees' individual definition. This situation is unreasonable.

Has the Commission ever developed a written policy statement for the Nature Area? Without a written policy for this unique park, the Commission is not assuming direct responsibility for what happens there.

The aesthetics of the area has been reduced considerably. In fact, it's downright ugly where it has been cleared, not to mention the drastic reduction of habitat for wildlife. By reducing habitat, you have effectively gotten rid of a great deal of wildlife. Without the food and shelter provided by habitat, much of the wildlife must leave the area to survive. We can do better; I, therefore, recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Live Science Consultant-Supervisor - Currently, the Park and Recreation Department has no one on its staff who is qualified or knowledgeable about wildlife or plant habitat. The

area has been maintained like a traditional city park which has caused great destruction to its natural state over the years.

The landscape architect hired and paid thousands of dollars in consultant work on the Nature Area and other parks is skilled in his work for traditional parks and golf courses. However, it's been my observation that he is not trained or knowledgeable about how to retain a nature area in its natural state. This takes a knowledgeable person in the natural sciences.

Furthermore, it's been my observation that no current or past Commission member has credentials or is knowledgeable in live sciences.

Poor decisions are made when knowledge is lacking.

Therefore, I recommend that the Park and Recreation Department hire a live science person and use the consultant services to write a protection and retention policy for the Wildlife Area. This person should supervise over all actions in regard to this specific park.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS

During the past several years, I've researched many problems in our Nature Area. Many actions by the Park and Recreation Department have worked against the purpose of retaining the area in as natural state as possible.

In April 1985, the Lodi Park and Recreation Department cleared a great deal of plant habitat from the Nature Area in the name of Mosquito Abatement and Fire Protection. This explanation was given to me by the City Manager, in response to my letter written to the City Council, objecting to the amount of habitat removed.

I began some research. I spoke with the County Mosquito Abatement Administrator, Mr. Jack Fiori. His description for abatement requirements in the Nature Area was reasonable. In my opinion, the Park Department removed far more habitat than was necessary.

The over-zealous clearing by the Park Department has historically caused much ill will in the community. Many people have incorrectly thought that the County Mosquito Abatement and Lodi Fire Department have been responsible for ordering the huge amounts of habitat removed rather than the Park Commission. The Commission must be held accountable in these matters. To do less would be shirking your responsibilities to the City Council and to the public. I would hope these problems could be solved in the spirit of cooperation rather than in confrontation.

1. PARK PATROL VEHICLES

Many of my walks in the Nature Area have been interrupted by the Park Patrol cruising in their cars on the path-

ways. I have had to get off the paths so their car could drive through. I've observed many other adults and young toddlers scurry off the paths for the cars, too.

These vehicles are a nuisance for pedestrians. They raise dust during the dry seasons, they cause stress on the environment, and they are inefficient.

I recommend that the Park Patrol use bicycles in the Nature Area. They're more cost effective and cause less stress on the environment. They would raise little dust, lessen the nuisance for pedestrians, and the patrollers could complete their duties more quickly.

Several creative programs have been developed by the Parks and Recreation Department for our youth. Would it be possible for the department to develop Youth Patrol units for the Nature Area?

2. HERBICIDE USE

I have observed the Park maintenance crews using herbicides on the norther side of the levy to get rid of most of the plant life.

Wild grapes and several almond trees grow there. Many people eat the ripened grapes and almonds. The very toxic herbicide spray is consumed by an unaware public. The wildlife that consumes the sprayed plant life must be affected too.

The fire department claims it never orders use of herbicides in its fire protection policy. Also, they do not require plant removal for the side of the levy. Why does the Park and Recreation Department use herbicides in the Nature Area? Why hasn't the department warned the public?

The removal of plant life from the side of the levy has caused soil erosion there. Before this practice began, I observed very little soil erosion on the side of the levy because the natural plant life flourished there.

3. REMOVAL OF DEAD HABITAT

It's ironic that the Docent program for the school children teaches the little ones not to remove a single thing from the Nature Area when touring there, not even fallen acorns or leaves, and yet, the Park Maintenance people have removed thousands of pounds of dead habitat.

Dead habitat serves a very important function to a natural eco-system. Removal of these materials deteriorates the system. The Commission should become informed about these matters.

4. REMOVAL OF HABITAT FROM THE SOUTH BANK OF RIVER

I resent the fact that my tax dollars are spent on removing the fallen trees, etc. along the south river bank bordering the Nature Area. Believe it or not, most of this material provides excellent rip rap for the prevention of bank erosion. This important habitat also serves a vital purpose for fish and wildlife. The Commission is responsible for removing this free natural rip rap that helped to reduce bank erosion. What a waste!

During this past week I saw a City Public Works Department crew clear a wide swath of habitat from the riverbank. This occurred where the drain pipe empties the stream water into the river.

After they removed the natural rip rap, they dumped several loads of large pieces of cement on the river bank side. According to one employee, this was done to prevent bank erosion!

It was obvious to me that the blackberries, wild grapes, small trees, and shrubs they removed served as an excellent deterrent to bank erosion until they mowed it all down. It looked to me like someone was trying to create needless busy work or was trying to get rid of unwanted broken chunks of cement. This looks ugly. I'd rather see natural plant growth as opposed to cement serve as rip rap any day.

Again, I recommend that you consult with experts. I'm not an expert in any of these areas, but I've read enough studies on these subjects to know that the people ordering much of the activities in our Nature Area, in the name of maintenance, are no experts either.

5. ASPHALT USED FOR INFILL

Crushed asphalt has been used to fill in depressions on a dirt path. Also, large broken chunks of asphalt has been used to fill in a cave-in near Pigs Lake. Broken asphalt is a damaging material for a natural environment. Natural materials such as rock and sand should be used. Your policy for the Nature Area should ban further use of such materials there.

6. ACCESS

When we built our home in 1967 on Edgewood Dr. we walked to the Mokelumne River regularly near Pigs Lake. The private owners didn't seem to mind the public using this access. When the city purchased the land our access to the river continued. Our access stopped after twenty years when the decision was made to close off the LeBec Court access to everyone except emergency vehicles and for special events like the

Triathlon. I never dreamed that the access at Pigs Lake would one day be closed to me in my old age when I first started using it twenty years ago. I strongly object.

Many people who use to walk in the Nature Area from my neighborhood hardly walk there anymore because of the lack of convenient access.

It may not have been the intention of the decision makers to discourage people from walking in the Nature Area when they closed off the LeBec Court Access, but that's what they accomplished by their action.

I strongly recommend that the foot path access gate at Le Bec Court be reopened to the public and that the vehicle gate be kept locked. The foot path gate should be locked and opened daily by the Lodi Lake Park employee who manages the main gate entrance for Lodi Lake Park and on the same schedule.

7. FISHING

A father of two young boys was told by the Park Patrol that they could not fish in the Mokelumne River from the Nature Area. I was shocked when he told me this because I've never seen a no fishing sign for the area and I've observed many people fishing there over the years. To my knowlege, the State Fish and Game hasn't prohibited fishing from there.

What is the official policy for fishing in the Nature Area? What is the policy for fishing in Pigs Lake or Lodi Lake?

CONCLUSIONS

Thank you for taking valuable time from your schedules in considering my concerns for the Nature Area.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have or to discuss solutions with you for these problems. I am firmly convinced, that through cooperation, solutions can be found.

Very truly yours,

Joyce N. Sullivan

Joyce N. Sullivan

cc: Lodi City Council
Lodi Fire Cief, Larry Hughes
San Joaquin County Mosquito Abatement Department, Jack Fiori
LUSD Docent Program, Jay Bell

Lodi Parks & Recreation Department

FEB 07 '90

City Manager's Office

January 31, 1990

Mrs. Joyce Sullivan
1819 Edgewood
Lodi, CA 95240

Dear Joyce:

Met with Fire Chief Larry Hughes, City Manager Tom Peterson and Parks and Recreation Director Ron Williamson to discuss your concerns about the Nature Area.

As you are aware, I had explained to you that much of the cutting done at the Nature Area was in response to the Lodi Fire Department's request for a "maintained" 12' wide and 12' high path. Attached is a copy of their letter to me on which I acted.

Our current budget does not allow us the manpower to do this kind of clearance in the Nature area. Therefore, I had arranged with the California Conservation Corps to trim the Nature Area in compliance with the Lodi Fire Department requirements. As I have been explaining to those who have asked, our crews acted on their previous understanding that a 20' clearance was needed to obtain a 12' "maintained" fire trail. The 20' clearance is required as we are only able to get free labor from the California Conservation Corps on a once-a-year basis. This, I believe, is the crux of our problem as I now am planning to maintain the Nature Area more frequently once new standards are set, to allow for a narrower path thus removing the need to make the cuts we did this year.

I have consulted our files which show the original design calls for 20' paths in the Nature Area. This plan was drawn and adopted June 1, 1977, so it has been the practice according to my crews that we have trimmed the paths this wide for some twelve years. We did not prune last year as the Lodi Fire Department and Mosquito Abatement District waived their requirements. Subsequently, I received the above mentioned letter and also verbal requests from Mosquito Abatement.

Contrary to what you may have heard, there were several fires in the Nature Area last year. In addition, there was one riot and attached is a letter from the Lodi Police Department who will be conducting exercises in the Nature Area with the S.W.A.T. team to respond to future problems.

Obviously, this puts me in the rather untenable position of trying to satisfy various agencies' needs which are contrary to my own efforts and the efforts of the docents to keep this area in a natural state.

January 31, 1990

I have met with Jay Bell and have given him the Morris & Wenell plans which are currently the only standards of maintenance under which our crews have operated. I have sent memos/letters to the various agencies asking for their exact requirements in the Nature Area. Copies of this information are enclosed. My hope is to somehow blend all of these various requirements into a written plan whereby I can act without constantly being the referee between all of these agencies and concerned citizens. My answer is to increase maintenance dollars for the Nature Area to allow for more frequent cutting thus allowing the removal of a minimal amount of foliage.

I would welcome your input through Jay Bell and the docents or please feel free to contact me directly. I will be happy to show you our current standards and work with you to address your concerns.

Sincerely yours,

Scott Essin
Parks Superintendent

SE:srb
Encl.

cc: Ron Williamson, Director Parks & Recreation ✓
Jay Bell, Lodi Lake Docents

Lodi Parks & Recreation Department

February 1, 1990

Mr. Jay Bell
335 Louie Avenue
Lodi, CA 95240

Subject: Spring/Summer Nature Tours at Lodi Lake

Dear Jay:

As we discussed, the Parks and Recreation Department will be initiating Spring and Summer tours at Lodi Lake's Nature Area. It is anticipated that these tours would occur Thursday evenings near dusk and Saturday mornings early. We would begin in April and go until September.

We will need to list the tours in the Parks and Recreation Summer/Fall Program brochure. I received the attached schedule from Dale Sumersille, who is putting this brochure together.

Could you submit to me before February 7, 1990, how you would propose to conduct this program and your costs to the City so we can get this information to Dale Sumersille for inclusion in the brochure.

Sincerely yours,



Scott Essin
Parks Superintendent

SE:srb

cc: Dale Sumersille, Recreation Supervisor
Ron Williamson, Director

LODI RECREATION & PARKS DEPARTMENT
125 North Stockton Street • Lodi, California 95240
(209) 333-6742

MEMO

10 STAFF

DATE 1/31/90

SUBJECT Next Brochure

MESSAGE

I NEED TO GET ALL INFORMATION FOR THE NEXT BROCHURE "SUMMER/FALL" NOW! THIS BROCHURE WILL BE MAILED OUT LATE MARCH IN TIME FOR OUR NEXT YOUTH SPORTS REGISTRATION APRIL 10 - MAY 18 SO THE INFO NEEDED IS APRIL TO END OF SEPT. IF YOUR INFO JUST NEEDS TO BE REVISED, THEN REUSE IT AND SEND TO ME.

I NEED ALL INFO NO LATER THAN FEB 7th

Thanks John

February 5, 1990

Mr. Scott Essin
Parks Superintendent
Lodi Parks and Recreation Department

Subject: Spring/Summer Nature Tours at Lodi Lake

Dear Scott:

Kathy and I have always shared Ron's and your enthusiasm about public tours of the Nature Area on Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. We are interested in the fact that the city is going to now initiate the tours.

We are, however, very concerned about the current state of affairs relating to the Nature Area and its possible future. At this time, Kathy and I do not feel comfortable about committing ourselves further to the area. We also hesitate to have the public continue to identify us with the area until we realize exactly what the plans for it are and what our input will be to realize those plans.

We might also suggest that now is possibly not an opportune time to approach the docents about the project. This is only an impression on our part and you may decide in favor of addressing the docent council at our next meeting, Thursday, February 8, 7 - 9 P.M. about this project.

Sincerely yours,



Jay and Kathy Bell

✓cc: Ron Williamson, Director Parks and Recreation

February 5, 1990

Mr. Scott Essin
Parks Superintendent
Lodi Parks and Recreation Department

Subject: Lodi Lake Nature Area Maintenance Plan

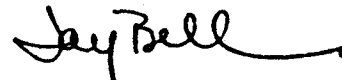
Dear Scott:

Thank you for including me in the input stage of planning for the future maintenance of the Nature Area. Also thank you for what is my best map of the area.

As you know, most of the work that I do concerning the nature area is on my own volunteer time. There was a period when I was allotted a couple hours every two weeks of school district time. That, unfortunately is not the case at present. Unfortunately, many of my volunteer hours were wasted by the overgrooming of the nature area last year and this year.

Therefore, I am constrained to hold up my progress until March 1st when the school district has sheduled me a day for special projects, during which I will work on the map. Thank you for your cooperation and patience.

Sincerely yours,


Jay Bell

✓cc: Ron Williamson

CITY COUNCIL

JOHN R. (Randy) SNIDER, Mayor
DAVID M. HINCHMAN
Mayor Pro Tempore
EVELYN M. OLSON
JAMES W. PINKERTON, Jr.
FRED M. REID

CITY OF LODI

CITY HALL, 221 WEST PINE STREET
CALL BOX 3006
LODI, CALIFORNIA 95241-1910
(209) 334-5634
TELECOPIER (209) 333-6795

THOMAS A. PETERSON
City Manager

ALICE M. REIMCHE
City Clerk

BOB McNATT
City Attorney

February 23, 1990

E. J. McCaughna
Principal
Lawrence School
721 Calaveras Street
Lodi, CA 95240

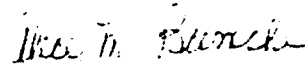
Dear Mr. McCaughna:

Please be advised that your February 5, 1990 letter expressing your concerns regarding the Lodi Lake nature area was presented to the Lodi City Council at its regular meeting of February 21, 1990.

The Council asked that this be a topic of review at a future Informal Informational (Shirtsleeve) Session. The nature area tour by the City Council and staff has been scheduled for 7:00 a.m., Tuesday, April 24, 1990. The City Council certainly appreciates your concern and looks forward to your joining the group on that date.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call this office.

Very truly yours,


Alice M. Reimche
City Clerk

AMR/jmp

CITY COUNCIL

JOHN R. (Randy) SNIDER, Mayor
DAVID M. HINCHMAN
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THOMAS A. PETERSON
City Manager

ALICE M. REIMCHE
City Clerk

BOB McNATT
City Attorney

February 23, 1990

Ms. Joyce Sullivan
1819 Edgewood Drive
Lodi, CA 95240

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

Please be advised that your January 30, 1990 letter expressing your concerns regarding the Lodi Lake nature area was presented to the Lodi City Council at its regular meeting of February 21, 1990.

The Council asked that this be a topic of review at a future Informal Informational (Shirtsleeve) Session. The nature area tour by the City Council and staff has been scheduled for 7:00 a.m., Tuesday, April 24, 1990. The City Council certainly appreciates your concern and looks forward to your joining the group on that date.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call this office.

Very truly yours,

Alice M. Reimche
Alice M. Reimche
City Clerk

AMR/jmp

Pronaska
308-7879

February 5, 1990

Lodi Parks and Recreation Commissioner:

Attached is a copy of the front page of our Lodi Nature Area Docent Council Newsletter for February. The article written by our President on the front expresses the Council's deep concern and chagrin regarding the conduct of those involved in the leveling of a great deal of the Nature Area trail.

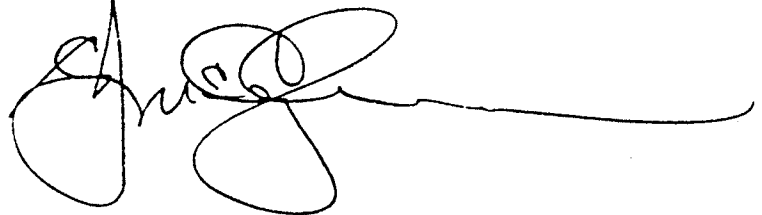
As you know, there are stops along the trail marked with numbered posts that point out unique features and sights of interest. Many of these posts are now standing by themselves because the indicated features were destroyed by the cleaning crew. Even some rare plants and trees planted by members of our Council were destroyed.

Needless to say, we are deeply disappointed. At one time we were assured that we would be invited to accompany any cleanup crew to point out features that need to be preserved. Evidently these promises were not sincerely given.

We are hoping that your group will be aware of our concerns and will help us to preserve what is left of a very unique natural phenomenon.

We will appreciate your investigation of this matter with those responsible for this action.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'E.J. McCaughna', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

E.J. McCaughna
Spokesperson
Lodi Nature Area Docent Council